assistance are still pending with the Government particularly in the case of Kerala; and

(f) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) and (b). No, Sir. ICAR/DARE has not set up any Agricultural Information Network Centre in the country. It has, however, initiated an Agricultural Research Information System (ARIS) to interlink various ICAR Institutes/State Agricultural Universities and Zonal Research Stations.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Not applicable.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Not applicable.

[Translation]

Foodgrains Production

*177. SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR :
SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA :

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) the estimated foodgrains production in the country by the year 2000 according to estimates of the FAO and Planning Commission;

(b) whether the Government propose to amend targets of the foodgrains production; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) The Planning Commission in the Eighth Five Year Plan Document have projected foodgrains production for the year 2001-02 at 245.0 million tonnes for the country as a whole. The FAO projection of the estimated foodgrains production in the country is placed at 201.7 million tonnes for the year 2000.

(b) and (c). The projected foodgrains production for the country would be looked into, at the time of finalising the Ninth Five Year Plan.

[English]

Investment in Fertilizer Sector

*178. SHRI NAMDEO DIWATHE : Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) the approved investment in PSUs in the Fertilizer sector during the eighth five year plan and the targets set for production;

(b) whether most of the PSUs failed to execute their projects involving fresh investment during the first three years of the Eighth plan thereby adding to the pressure of utilising the investible funds during the last two years;

(c) if so, the projects for which approval of fresh investment was sought by the fertilizer companies and reasons for slow progress in utilisation of funds; and

(d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to ensure that funds allocated for investment for the current year are fully utilised and actual status of the projects for which fresh investment has been granted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) and (b). An outlay of Rs. 5352 crore was approved for the public/cooperative undertakings in the fertilizer sector during the Eighth Five Year Plan. The total plan expenditure in the first three years of the Eighth Plan period was Rs. 1106.17 crore. The investment shortfall in the first 3 years of the Plan with reference to the approved outlay was mainly on account of the disruption in the fertilizer sector following partial decontrol in 1992-93 and delays in the finalisation of the investment proposal of the public/cooperative undertakings. Investment in the sick fertilizer PSUs was also restricted pending finalisation of their rehabilitation schemes.

The plan expenditure during 1995-96 increased to Rs. 1613.47 crore. The outlay for 1996-97 is Rs. 2660.17 crore.

The target for production in the terminal year of the Eighth Plan i.e 1996-97 was set at 98 lakh MT per annum (MTPA) of nitrogen nutrient and 30 lakh MTPA of phosphate nutrient.

(c) The following investment proposals based on detailed feasibility reports were approved during the first three years of the Eighth Five Year Plan :

S. No.	Name of the Project	Estimated capital cost (Rs. crore)	Production envisaged (in lakh MTPA)	Expected date of commissioning
1.	IFFCO'S Aonla Expansion Project	960.00	Urea 7.26	1.1.1997
2.	IFFCO'S Phulpur Expansion Project	993.00	Urea 7.26	20.1 1998
3.	IFFCO'S Kalol Expansion Project	119.08	Urea 1.50	1.9 1997
4.	NFL's Vijaipur Expansion Project	987.30	Urea 7.26	31.3 1997
5.	Revamp of MFL's plants	487.47	Urea 0.70	31.3 1997
6.	New ammonia plant of FACT	618.00	Ammonia 2.97	30 6 1997

Government had also approved, in principle, a revival package for FCI and HFC in April, 1995 envisaging a fresh investment of Rs. 2201 crore at 1994 price levels. It was, however, stipulated that the fresh funds required for revamp should be obtained

from financial institutions and/or cooperatives in the fertilizer sector so as to minimise the need for budgetary support. As the required funding arrangements could not be tied up, the revival package is being reformulated from the stand point of the financial institutions.

The nitrophosphate, melamine and Saudi Arabian Workshop Projects of RCF, PPCL's pyrites based SSP project, NFL's Panipat Expansion Project and KRIBHCO's proposals for manufacturing MDF Board, setting up an Argon Gas Recovery Unit and participating in the equity of a DAP company overseas have been dropped due to adverse evolution of the project viability parameters. The nitrophosphate project of KRIBHCO is also being reconsidered by the Society on these grounds. Pre-project activities of the Oman India Fertilizer Project of KRIBHCO/RCF and the Nellore Project of IFFCO are at an advanced stage.

(d) Plan expenditure is being regularly monitored and the progress of major projects closely reviewed to minimise the slippages against implementation schedules.

Exemption to Rice Exporters

*179. DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) the details of exemption granted earlier to the rice exporters from the levy rice;

(b) whether the Government have withdrawn the exemption granted to the rice exporters;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) the reasons for re-imposition of the levy specification; and

(e) the extent to which it would help the Public Distribution System network?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) In the 1995-96 rice marketing season *superfine* and *fine* rice meant for export was exempted from levy.

(b) to (d). Exemptions from levy were allowed In the year 1995-96 in view of comfortable levels of stock of rice in the Central Pool. The Central Government has, however, not agreed to allow any exemption to any variety of non-basmati rice either for internal market or for export, from levy obligation in the current kharif marketing season 1996-97.

The procurement of rice in the marketing year 1995-96 came down to 98.80 lakh tonnes from 134.03 lakh tonnes in 1994-95 Season. In order to ensure adequate procurement of rice for Central Pool for meeting the demand for PDS and other welfare schemes, it has been decided not to allow exemption from levy in the current marketing year 1996-97.

(e) Collection of levy without exemptions this year will result in higher level of procurement and increased availability of rice for PDS and other welfare schemes.

Natural Gas for Urea

*180. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state :

(a) whether his Ministry have demanded release of natural gas for the urea industry to boost the domestic production thereof and reduce country's dependence on imports; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SIS RAM OLA) : (a) and (b). The demand of natural gas for different sectors exceeds its actual availability. Hence, the allocations for the consumer industries, including fertilizer plants and projects, are periodically determined through, institutionlised inter-Ministerial consultations.

Investment in Pharma Sector

1529. SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY : Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the country is losing out badly in regard to the latest technology and investment in pharma Sector;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof along with the details to direct foreign investment in the drug sector during the last three years;

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to liberlise the drug sector for harnessing huge potential for foreign investment through provision of patent protection to the foreign investors;

(d) the details of action plan formulated in this regard; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to amend the Indian Patent Act, 1970, to attract, the latest pharmacy technology?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d). The existing policy makes provisions for foreign investment upto 51% in the case of all bulk drugs, their intermediates and formulations; investment above 51% is considered on a case to case basis in areas where investment is not forthcoming and the production of the bulk drug is from basic stage.

(e) As regards Indian Patent Act, 1970, under the TRIPS agreement of the WTO agreement a developing country like India has time till January 1, 2000 to